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XVII.—THE BALLAD AND THE DANCE

It is the purpose of the following paper to examine the relationship of the mediæval ballad to the dance, in origin and in traditional usage. Particular reference is had to the English and Scottish ballad type. In various preceding papers¹ I have considered the theory currently accepted in America of the inseparableness of primitive dance, music, and song and have shown that primitive song is not narrative in character. I have also questioned the assumption that the ballad is the archetypal poetic form—this position should be assigned to the song, not the ballad—and the assumption of “communal” as against individual authorship for the English and Scottish popular ballads. The present paper examines the relation to the dance of the English and Scottish ballads. The view is widely accepted both in the Old World and in America that this, and similar ballad types, originated in the dance. The following paper canvasses the evidence for this view and makes inquiry as to its validity.

I

THE NAME “BALLAD”

Much of the confusion in scholarly and literary discussion of the English and Scottish ballads and their Ameri-

¹ See *The Beginnings of Poetry, Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, xxxii (1917), pp. 201 ff.; *The South-western Cowboy Songs and the English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, *Modern Philology*, xi (1913), pp. 195 ff.; *New-World Analogues of the English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, *The Mid-West Quarterly*, iii (1916), pp. 171 ff.; *Ballads and the Illiterate*, *ibid.*, v, p. 4, etc.

can descendants or analogues, rests on ambiguous and contradictory usages of the word "ballad." It has been employed for as many lyric types as were "sonnet" and "ode," and it has hardly yet settled down into consistent application. The popular use of the word for a short song, often sentimental in character, or for the music for such a song, is clear enough; but its most recently developed meaning of narrative song, currently employed by literary historians, is only now assuming initial place in the dictionaries.² It is this newly developed usage which has brought confusion. For though the shifts in meaning of the term "ballad" have often been noted and traced, clarity or consistency in its employment have not followed, even among the tracers. They distinguish what they mean by ballad clearly enough; but they lose sight of their own distinctions when they come to theorizing about their material. Within the last one hundred and fifty years the name has been restricted, among specialists, to a type of English song to which it did not belong originally, and a type which is not called by that name in other languages, save when the usage has been carried over from the

² Although the meaning narrative song gained headway in the eighteenth century, it was not very clearly recognized in the *New English Dictionary*, 1888. The entry given fifth place is "A simple spirited poem in short stanzas, originally a 'ballad' in sense 3 [popular songs—often broadsides] in which some popular story is graphically narrated. (This sense is essentially modern.)" *The New Webster International*, 1910, also gives this meaning fifth place, but contributes clarity: "A popular kind of short narrative poem adapted for singing; especially a romantic poem of the kind characterized by simplicity of structure and impersonality of authorship." In *The Standard Dictionary*, 1917, is entered as the first meaning of the word: "A simple lyrical poem telling a story or legend, usually of popular origin; as the ballad of Chevy Chase." Here the older order of definition is reversed, recognizing the change established long before in usage.

English.³ The etymology of "ballad" should not be given undue weight, since the attachment of the name to the material which it describes is recent. Over-emphasis upon its etymology, and the double and triple senses in which contemporary scholars use the term, have puzzled and misled many earnest students. Writers who insist that they have clearly in mind what they mean sometimes apply the name "ballad" to dance songs, sometimes to narrative songs, sometimes to pure lyrics, and sometimes to all three.

Ballad is derived from *ballare*, to dance, and historically it means dancing song; it is associated etymologically with *ballet*, a form of dance. In the Romance languages, from which the word issued into general European currency, it came to apply to various types of lyrics. The French and Italian pieces taking the name, or various forms of it, are genuinely lyrical; they are to be associated with dance origins, and they do not narrate happenings or suggest action. Many were used, it is certain, as dance songs.⁴ To be a folk-ballad, not merely a folk-song, an English piece must tell a story. Poems of the type of Rossetti's *Sister Helen* or *Stratton Water*, or Longfellow's *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, are termed "literary" ballads, as over against anonymous traditional ballads, like *Sir*

³The Danish name for pieces of English lyric-epic type is *folkeviser*. The Spanish name is *romances*. The German usage of *Ballade* follows the English; German poets derived much of their balladry from England. The name is applied to short poems in which the narrative element is as important as the lyrical. See F. A. Brockhaus, *Konversations-Lexicon*, Berlin and Vienna, 1894. Pieces of the English lyric-epic type have no specific name in French. They are grouped under the large class of *chansons populaires*, a name as inclusive as our "folk-song." But see also note 6.

⁴Dante, for example, assigns *ballata* a lower plane than song proper or sonnet on account of its dependence on the aid of dancers.

Patrick Spens. The name ballad, meaning primarily, as we have seen, a dance-lyric, is not entirely satisfactory for these lyric-epics. It gained its distinctive application by chance rather than by historic right, and it gained this application late. Owing partly to the etymology of the name, partly to the hypotheses of certain critics, who associate the origin of the English and Scottish pieces with the choral dances of mediæval festal communes, ballads of the type collected by Professor F. J. Child have come to be associated with the dance to a degree which the evidence does not justify. The dance is given place in the foreground, as essential in defining the type and its origin, instead of being made something remote and subsidiary. For the Child pieces, the etymology of the name should be given little or no emphasis; insistence on it is likely to be misleading. In fact, dance-genesis has more immediate connection with English lyrics of many other types, in the consideration of which we are not asked to have it constantly before us, than it has with the English ballads; for instance, with the *ballade*, or the *rondeau*.

The name "ballad" was not applied specifically to heroic or romantic narrative songs until the eighteenth century. Sidney and Pepys use the term "song." In Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary* "ballad" means "song" and nothing more. It was Ritson who first stated the distinction that now obtains. "With us, songs of sentiment, expression, or even description, are properly called songs, in contradistinction to mere narrative pieces, which we now denominate ballads."⁵ For several centuries earlier

⁵ Introduction to his *Select Collection of English Songs*, 3 vols., 2nd edition, 1913. Shenstone and Michael Bruce had expressed the distinction earlier (see S. B. Hustvedt, *Ballad Criticism in Scandinavia and Great Britain*, 1916, p. 254), but it was first publicly enunciated by Ritson.

the name had been applied with miscellaneous reference. It might be given to a short didactic poem, a love poem (as sometimes now), to poems of satire and vituperation, to political pieces, to hymns and religious pieces, to elegiac pieces, occasionally to narrative pieces; in short, to lyrics of any type. Thus its specific application to verse of the Child type came late and not by inheritance, but arbitrarily. Nor did the etymology of the name play any part in the selection of it for the pieces to which it was applied.

It will be sufficient to sketch in summary here the stages of development for English in the usage of the name ballad.⁶

When Chaucer uses the term ballad it is for lyrics of the fixed type imported from the French, the *Balade de Bon Conseyll*, or *Lak of Stedfastnesse*, or the *Compleynt to His Empty Purse*, not to lyric-epics.⁷ Ballad was long used of dance songs of various types, as a few citations

⁶ The entries in *The New English Dictionary* have been referred to. Fourteen pages of matter illustrative of the history of *ballade* are given in Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX Siècle*, Paris (1867), ranging from the first entry "chanson à danser" to, "Aujourd'hui, ode d'un genre familier et le plus souvent légendaire et fantastique: les ballades de Schiller, de Goethe, etc." Nothing is said of a narrative element. But see especially Helen Louise Cohen, *The Ballade*, Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature, New York, 1915. According to Miss Cohen, the word is used in contemporary French in the way in which it has come to be used in English and in German. "In France, at the present time, the same word, *ballade*, serves for the English or Scottish popular ballad and for a certain kind of narrative poem, written in imitation of German authors like Uhland, as well as for the artificially fixed lyric poem." The usages of "ballad" for English have been traced by Professor Gummere, *Old English Popular Ballad*, pp. xviii ff.

⁷ An excellent example of his usage is found in the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, where he has his characters dance in a circle "as it were in carole-wise" while they sang the *ballade*—

"Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere."

will show; e. g., these lines from Dunbar's *Golden Targe*, of about 1500:

And sang ballettes with mighty notes clere,
Ladies to daunce full sobirly assayit.

Ascham writes in 1545,⁸ "these balades and roundes, these galiardes, pauanes and daunces." A passage in George Gascoigne's *Certain Notes of Instruction*, 1575, is very specific. He thinks of the term mainly in Chaucer's sense:

There is also another kinde, called Ballade, and therof are sundrie sortes: for a man may write ballade in a staffe of sixe lines, every line conteyning eighte or sixe sillables, wherof the firste and third, second and fourth do rime acrossse, and the fifth and sixth do rime together in conclusion. You may write also your *ballad* of tenne syllables, rimying as before is declared, but these two were wont to be most comonly used in *ballade*, whiche propre name was (I thinke) derived of this worde in Italian *Ballare*, whiche signifieth to daunce, and indeed, those kinds of rimes serve beste for daunces and light matters.

Ben Jonson, in *Love Restored*, writes "Unlesse we shold come in like Morrice-dancers and whistle our ballet ourselves." All these citations show loose reference to amatory songs, and dance songs, lyrical, not narrative in character. The word is also applied to pieces of the various types enumerated at the end of the preceding paragraph. Cotgrave's *Dictionary of the French and English Tongues*, 1611, associates the word with dance song. Burton writes, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, III, 1, i, "Castalio would not have young men read the Canticles because to his thinking it was too light and amorous a tract, a ballad of ballads, as our old English translation hath it." Percy, as often pointed out, employs ballad in his *Reliques* with miscellaneous application. Ritson's contribution toward establishing the word in its latest meaning has been quoted already.

⁸ *Toxophilus*, Arber ed., p. 39.

Coleridge's use is modern when he writes of "The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spens." To summarize the stages for English:

1. Ballad in the fourteenth century meant the French art lyric with fixed form. The name could be given to a dance song, though the latter was more often called a carol. Ballad, in the period when it could mean dance song, did not mean "narrative lyric."

2. In the Elizabethan period, ballads, ballets, ballants, etc., are terms loosely associated with song, or lyric verse of various kinds. The name could be applied to dance songs, among these types and, though infrequently, to narrative lyrics.

3. In the eighteenth century, ballad continues in loose popular usage. With specialists it comes to have particular reference to narrative songs. The narrative songs which the eighteenth century collected were not dance songs, and they are not the pieces called by cognate names in the Romance languages, from which ballad, in lyric nomenclature, is derived.

4. In the nineteenth century, ballad continues in loose popular reference as synonymous with song. In the use of specialists it is increasingly applied to narrative songs; by the twentieth century, this has become the primary meaning. The variant *ballade*, in the French and fourteenth-century English sense, is revived, in the nineteenth century, with the re-introduction of the fixed lyric type.

This sketch should have made clear that a definition of the ballad as "a narrative lyric made and sung at the dance and handed down in popular tradition" is not warranted, for English ballads, by the history of the word. For a valid etymological argument for ballad as a dance

song, one would have to derive the lyric-epic species, *ballad*, from the fixed art species, the *ballade*. And there is no sufficient proof that narrative lyrics were ever, anywhere, at any time, by any people, made and sung at the dance. The dance songs of primitive peoples are not narrative, and the earliest English dance songs are not narrative. Nor is this longer definition, also Professor Gummere's,⁹ better. "The popular ballad, as it is understood for the purpose of these selections, is a narrative, in lyric form, with no traces of individual authorship, and is preserved mainly by oral tradition. In its earliest stages it was meant to be sung by a crowd, and got its name from the dance to which it furnished the sole musical accompaniment." The first sentences are unimpeachable, but the last is not. The lyric type to which reference is made did not get its name until the late eighteenth century, and then took it by borrowing or transference from songs of another character, for which it was more appropriate. It could not have taken its name from its origin, nor is its name evidence as to its origin.

II

DANCE SONGS PROPER

The name actually given in England to dance songs of the Middle Ages was "carol." We hear of carols before we hear of ballads. There is a familiar picture of a high-born throng singing to the caroling of a lady in the Chaucerian *Romance of the Rose*:

The folk of which I telle you so,
Upon a carole wenten tho.

⁹ In *The Popular Ballad*, 1907, and "Ballads" in Warner's *Library of the World's Best Literature*.

A lady caroled hem that nyghte,
 Gladness (the) blisful, the lyghte . . .
 743-6.

Tho mightest thou caroles seen,
 And folk (ther) daunce and mery been
 And make many a fair tourning
 Upon the grene gras springing . . .
 759-62.

The description is continued, 802-15, 850-54, and onwards, and teaches us no little concerning mediæval dance customs. Other passages, illustrating the use of carol for dance song, in the next century, might be multiplied. Many can be found in the dictionaries.

Suppose we try to put ourselves back into the old world of dance songs. What kind of song was it which the lady sang, and to which the others danced? It might have been a *ballade*, or roundel, or "virelai," or some type of art lyric, with fixed refrain of regular recurrence; for such lyrics were used for dancing.¹⁰ Or it might have had greater suggestion of animation and movement, like many examples afforded by Old French verse;¹¹ or it might have been a gay love lyric. That it was anything like *King Estmere*, or *Thomas Rymer*, or *Edward*, or *Lord Randal*, is most improbable. And when peasant throngs, as over against aristocrats, danced in feudal times, they did not dance, as I believe, to pieces of the lyric-epic type just mentioned. Nor, as a general thing, the rule rather than the exception, did they dance to their own improvisations. It is more likely that they danced to current in-

¹⁰ Compare the quotation from Chaucer's Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, note 7 preceding.

¹¹ See the *ballettes*, in Jeanroy's *Les Origines de la Poésie Lyrique en France au Moyen Age*; and his letter, cited in Miss Cohen's *The Ballade*, p. 15; also Joseph Bédier, *Les Plus Anciennes Danses Françaises*, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Jan. 15, 1906, p. 398.

herited songs, appropriate for dance purposes, with, possibly enough, a bygone vogue in higher circles behind them; that is, if we keep the analogies of existent dance songs before us.

The following lines from Gawain Douglas point to the dancing of his characters mostly to lyric and amatory matter:¹²

Sum sang ryng-dansys ledis and roundis
 With vocis schill, qhill all the dail resoundis
 Quharso thai walk into thar carolyng
 For amorus lays doith the Roches ryng:
 And sang, 'the schyp salys our the salt faym
 Will bryng thir merchandis and my lemman haym';
 Sum other syngis, I wil be blyth and lycht
 Mine hart is lent upon so gudly wight.

But we need not speak speculatively of mediæval dance songs. Many remain to us; and it is possible to derive from them pretty clear ideas as to what the typical ones were like. The well-known *Sumer is icumen in* of the thirteenth century, might have been a dance song—its animation and movement would make it appropriate; and welcomes to spring, when dancing on the green or in the grove could be resumed, were common for dance-song usage in all parts of Europe.¹³ A classic example of a dance song is that preserved by Fabyan (1516), celebrating the victory of the Scots at Bannockburn:¹⁴

Maydens of Englonde, sore may ye morne,
 For your lemmans ye have loste at Bannockisborne!
 With a hewe a lowe.

¹² *Æneid*, Prologue of Bk. XII, p. 193.

¹³ "King Cnut's Song," of which a few lines remain, in thirteenth-century form, seems, from external and internal testimony, to have been a rowing song, later used, possibly as a dance song. For its bearing on ballad origins, see *Modern Language Notes*, March, 1919.

¹⁴ *Concordance of Histories*.

What wenyth the Kyng of Englonde
 So soon to have wonne Scotlonde:
 With a rumby lowe.

This song, says Fabyan, "was after many days sung in dances, in caroles of the maidens and minstrels of Scotland." High-born maidens they were, too, most likely, not peasants. It is appropriate for a dance song. It is lyrical, not a verse story. The refrain is important, and holds it together; but it is not narrative. It is nothing like a Child piece, and never became like one, so far as there is evidence.

Here are two songs which are presumably dance songs, from the fifteenth century, the first unusually spirited: ¹⁵

Icham of Irlaunde,
 Am of the holy londe
 Of Irland;e;
 Good sir, pray I ye
 For of Saynte Charite,
 Come ant daunce wyt me
 In Irlaunde.

The second also sounds suitable for its purpose:

Holi with his mery men they
 can daunce in hall;
 Ivy & her ientyll women can
 not daunce at all,

 But lyke a meyne of bullokes
 in a water fall
 Or on a whot somer's day
 Whan they be mad all.

 Nay, nay, ive, it may not be,
 iwis;
 For holy must haue the mastery,
 as the maner is.

¹⁵ The first is from MS. Rawlinson, D. 913, f. 1, the second from MS. Balliol, 354, f. 229, b. They are cited by Professor Padelford, *Cambridge History of English Literature*, II, xvi, p. 422.

Neither of these has the stanzaic pattern of the ballads. A song certainly used as a dance song, and very animated and lyrical, is the familiar *The Hunt is Up* of the time of Henry VIII. The lines are short, and they throw the hearer into the dancing mood. Some examples of Old English dance songs, lively and appropriate in melody, coming from the sixteenth century, are given in Chappell's *Old English Popular Music*. An especially popular one was *John, Come Kiss Me Now*.

Jon come kisse me now, now,
Jon come kisse me, now,
Jon, come kisse me by and by,
and make no more adow.

Both nobly-born groups from castle or court and village peasant groups had their dance songs in the Middle Ages; but surely these songs were not contemporaneously of identical type; and it is very improbable that either type was the Child type. There is a great deal of unmistakable testimony as to the use of lyrical, song-like pieces, in England, for dance songs. Next to none exists—not to dwell upon their smaller intrinsic appropriateness—for the staple use of narrative songs for such purpose.

There is evidence, from recent times, that in a few cases well-known Child pieces have been ritualized into dance songs. W. W. Newell speaks of *Barbara Allen* as used in "play party" games in the early part of the nineteenth century in New England. This ballad was an actress's song, in the seventeenth century, when we first hear of it. According to Professor Child, *The Maid Freed from the Gallows* has known game-song usage.¹⁶ A version recovered in Nebraska of *The Two Sisters* has obviously been

¹⁶See also Gilchrist and Broadwood, *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, v, pp. 228 ff.

used as a dance song. The following are specimen stanzas:

There was an old woman lived on the seashore,
Bow down

There was an old woman lived on the seashore,
Balance true to me

And she had daughters three or four,
Saying I'll be true to my love
If my love is true to me

The oldest and yongest were walking the seashore,
Bow down

The oldest and yongest were walking the seashore,
Balance true to me

The oldest pushed the yongest ore,
Saying I'll be true to my love
If my love is true to me

Such might not have been the case, yet one feels as though, if any of these pieces had been orally preserved for some generations as a dance song, for throngs on the village green, the narrative element would have become yet more fragmentary and inconsequential than it is in the quoted dance-song version of *The Two Sisters*; the refrain meantime assuming greater and greater prominence, and becoming the stable and identifying feature of the song. For dance songs proper, preserved in tradition, one expects a strong refrain formula and a fading or utterly absent narrative element.

That the Child pieces should be utilized, though infrequently, as dance or game songs is not to be wondered at; for popular songs of all kinds are so utilized occasionally, alongside the more appropriate inherited dance songs. Mediæval dancing throngs, like their descendants now, were no doubt likely to utilize any new song as a dance song; as *The Hunt is Up*, of the time of Henry VIII, according to *The Complaynt of Scotland* (1549). We are told that in the fast-dying-out play-party or ring-dance

songs of our own rural communities, songs like *John Brown's Bady*, *Captain Jinks*, *Little Brown Jug*, and the negro minstrel *Jim along Jo*, or *Buffalo Gals*, have been so used. Indeed, the minstrel *Old Dan Tucker* has died out of memory as a minstrel song, and has been kept alive as a ring-game song. But if the Child ballads had been dance songs *par excellence*, they would have come down to us very differently in tradition. They played a large rôle in popular recital and song in the Middle Ages, and had the rôle they played as dance songs been proportionately large, we should have unmistakable evidence of it; both external testimonies, and evidence within the songs themselves. We should know from the changes which they developed in structure, from internal allusions to the dance, and from the lore of traditional dance songs.

The dance may well have started many forms of mediæval lyrism with refrain formulas, whether of the artistic or of the more popular type. Such derivation is usually assigned to many of them. But it is the more lyrical forms, rather than the verse-tales, which were most closely bound up with the dance. We also associate with the dance the spontaneous popular lyrics, dance songs proper, which have been preserved for us here and there in printed form, or those which have descended to us in our ring-dance or game songs. Both the art lyrics with refrains, and the more popular and impersonal lyrics with refrains, like *Sumer is icumen in*, make their appearance in literature before ballads of the Child type do.

If dance origin, or connection with the dance, is an essential feature of "ballads," the name belongs with better right to mediæval art lyrics, to the surviving dance songs proper, or to the type remaining in our play-party songs and ring games, for which we have no specific name, aside from the inclusive and ambiguous "folk-song." It

is always a safe thing to test our theories as to older conditions for popular song—mediæval conditions, for example—by usages in living society, where these afford analogies; for human procedure, whether in language, action, or song, has remained pretty constant from primitive times onward. The ring games of young people of the present day preserve many of the dramatic elements of the communal dance, and the songs used in them seem to preserve many of the features of the old dance songs. It was the form of these songs, not that of the Child pieces, which was conditioned by dance usage, and bears the marks of such usage. If the Child pieces were primarily evolved in the dance, they ought to show more signs of it, and to be structurally more suitable; for instance, they should suggest more swing and movement. And to think of them as evolved *via* dances of commoners, not of aristocrats, is difficult indeed.

Let us look at some of the dance songs remaining in present tradition, and then apply our observations backward. Children's game songs, and the play-party songs of young folks on the green and in the parlor, in rural communities, have been collected, in England chiefly by Mrs. Gomme, and in the United States by W. W. Newell for New England, and by many collectors for the central west. It is generally agreed that our traditional dance and game songs descend from those of the middle ages and preserve many ancient features; especially the dances in circle form which are executed to the singing of the participants, not to the music of instruments. A number of these pieces seem surely to be of high descent, and many even reflect the old environment of grove and green. Some of the texts sound as though they accompanied the dances of the high born. Recall the many references to "ladies" or "my fair lady"—"lady" is not yet a democratic noun

in England—to kings and princes, or dukes, to solid gold rings, to “He wore a star upon his breast,” and the like. Most of the songs suggest that they are movement songs by their very wording, or structure. In most cases a typical stanza only will be cited; for the songs are pretty familiar, and they have become accessible, in late years, in game books for school usage. The citations are from Mrs. Gomme’s *Dictionary of British Folk-Lore*.¹⁷

Here we go round the mulberry bush,
The mulberry bush, the mulberry bush,
Here we go round the mulberry bush,
On a cold and frosty morning.

Mulberry Bush, I, p. 404.

Round and round the village,
Round and round the village,
Round and round the village,
As we have done before.

In and out the windows,
In and out the windows,
In and out the windows,
As we have done before.

Round and Round the Village, II, p. 122.

Tripping up the green grass,
Dusty, dusty day,
Come all ye pretty fair maids,
Come and with me play. . . .

¹⁷ Mrs. Gomme gives a list of dance games, II, p. 465, and of circle-form games, with singing and action, II, p. 476. The songs cited here are recognized by her as descending in traditional dance usage.

“In den Kinderreigen,” says Böhme, *Geschichte des Tanzes*, ch. XVII, “werden wir noch alten Überresten von Tanzliedern der Vorzeit begegnen.” As ring-dances were given up by the mature they lingered among children. One should not infer, however, that *all* children’s play songs were originally game or dance-songs of grown-ups. Childhood is as ancient as maturity, and even the savagest children have their own songs.

Naughty man, he won't come out,
He won't come out, he won't come out,
Naughty man, he won't come out,
To help us in our dancing.

Green Grass, I, p. 156.

From another text of the same song:

Here we go up the green grass,
The green grass, the green grass,
Here we go up the green grass,
So early in the morning.

Ibid., I, p. 160.

A ring, a ring o' roses,
A pocket full of posies;
A curtsy in and a curtsy out,
And a curtsy all together.

A Ring of Roses, II, p. 108.

Green gravel green gravel, the grass is so green,
The fairest young damsel that ever was seen. . . .

Green Gravel, I, p. 171.

The material is too abundant and too familiar for much illustration to be needed. A few more miscellaneous stanzas are:

Here we come a-piping,
First in spring and then in May,
The Queen she sits upon the sand,
Fair as a lily, white as a wand:
King John has sent you letters three,
And begs you'll read them unto me,
We can't read one without them all,
So, pray, Miss Bridget, deliver the ball.

Queen Anne, II, p. 91.

Here's a soldier left his lone,
Wants a wife and can't get none,
Merrily go round and choose your own,
Choose a good one or else choose none,
Choose the worst or choose the best,
Or choose the very one you like best.

Here's a Soldier, I, p. 206.

Poor Mary, what're you weepin' for,
 A-weepin' for, a-weepin' for,
 Pray, Mary, what're you weepin' for?
 On a bright summer's day.

Poor Mary Sits A-Weeping, II, p. 47.

The following dramatic song is listed by Mrs. Gomme as a circle-form song; though she thinks it originally a harvest-song:

Oats and beans and barley grow!
 Oats and beans and barley grow!
 Do you or I or anyone know
 How oats and beans and barley grow?
 First the farmer *sows* his seed,
 Then he *stands* and takes his ease,
Stamps his foot, and *claps* his hands,
 Then *turns round* to view the land
 Waiting for a partner, waiting for a partner!
 Open the ring and take one in.

Oats and Beans and Barley, II, p. 1.

Let us turn next to some of the ring-dance songs of young people in the United States, surviving in our fast-dying-out play-party songs. The dancing, as in the mediæval dance songs, is to the singing of the dancers, not to instrumental music. Old World importations are easily recognized. The refrains remain the same as in their British cognates:

Come honey, my love, come trip with me,
 In the morning early
 Heart and hand we'll take our stand;
 'Tis true, I love you dearly.

Weevilly Wheat, p. 18.²⁸

Oh, the jolly old miller boy, he lived by the mill,
 The mill turned round with a right good will,
 And all that he made, he put it on the shelf,

²⁸ Mrs. L. D. Ames, *The Missouri Play-Party*, *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, XXIV (1911), p. 302.

At the end of the year he was gaining in his wealth,
One hand in the hopper, and the other in the sack,
Gents step forward and the ladies step back.

The Jolly Old Miller, p. 19.¹⁹

Go out and in the window,
Go out and in the window,
Go out and in the window,
For we shall gain the day.

We're Marching Round the Levy, p. 20.²⁰

Lost your partner, what'll you do?
Lost your partner, what'll you do?
Lost your partner, what'll you do?
Skip to My Lou, my darling.

Skip to My Lou.²¹

Come all ye young people that's wending your way,
And sow your wild oats in your youthful day,
For the daylight it passes, and night's coming on,
So choose you a partner, and be marching along, marching along.²²

Professor E. F. Piper points out ²³ that in songs which describe the progress of a game, like *The Miller Boy* (*The Jolly Miller* of Mrs. Gomme) and *Juniper Tree*:

O dear sister Phoebe, how happy were we,
The night we sat under the juniper tree!
The juniper tree, heigho, heigho!
The juniper tree, heigho!

Then rise you up, Sister, go choose you a man,
Go choose you the fairest that ever you can,
Then rise you up, Sister, and go, and go,
Then rise you up, Sister, and go. . . .

the form remains fairly constant. In such songs one cannot easily change the words without changing the formula. In the same way, *Oats*, *pease*, *beans*, remains

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 314.

²³ *Some Play-Party Games of the Middle West*, *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, CIX, p. 264.

fairly constant. *Wevilly Wheat* and *Kilmacrankie* perhaps afford examples of "the decay of ballad matter under the usage of the singing game, or dance."²⁴ Many of the songs he lists show the influence of quadrilles and other dances, illustrating once more the tendency of the imported, or higher, or newer, to descend and linger among the humbler and more remote. A few more illustrations of genuine communal dance songs should suffice:

We come here to bounce around,
 We come here to bounce around,
 We come here to bounce around,
 Tra, la, la, la!
 Ladies, do, si, do,
 Gents, you know,
 Swing to the right,
 And then to the left,
 And all promenade.²⁵

Up and down the center we go,
 Up and down the center we go,
 Up and down the center we go,
 (This cold and frosty morning.

*Chase that Squirrel.*²⁶

When popular songs, or street songs, are utilized as dance songs, they are handled like this:

Captain Jinks

I'm Captain Jinks of the horse marines,
 I feed my horse on corn and beans,
 And court young ladies in their teens,
 For that's the style of the army.

²⁴ This seems the natural process; but compare Professor Gummere's present theories of ballad growth and "improvement," cited a little farther on. The process which, to collectors of folk dance-songs, brings ballad degradation, to Professor Gummere is the process by which are evolved "good" ballads. At other times, however, he still speaks occasionally of the "degradation" and "decay" due to tradition.

²⁵ Ames, p. 296.

²⁶ Piper, p. 266.

We'll all go round and circle left,
 We'll circle left, we'll circle left,
 We'll all go round and circle left,
 For that's the style of the army.
 The ladies right and form a ring,
 And when they form you give'm a swing,
 And when you swing you give'm a call,
 And take your lady and promenade all.²⁷

Jim along Jo

Hi, Jim along, Jim along, Josie
 Hi, Jim along, Jim, along Jo
 Hi, Jim along, Jim along Josie
 Hi, Jim along, Jim along Jo.²⁸

Little Brown Jug

Sent my brown jug down in town,
 Sent my brown jug down in town,
 Sent my brown jug down in town,
 So early in the morning.²⁹

Not one of these pieces is a ballad, just as the vocal accompaniments to old British dances round the Maypole were not ballads. One of the latter has survived in the ring games of the Georgia negroes, again illustrating the survival, in outlying places, among the humble and remote, of matter assimilated from the usage, in bygone vogue, of people of another social class:

All around the May-pole,
 The May-pole, the May-pole,
 All around the May-pole.
 Now, Miss Sally, won't you bow? etc.³⁰

²⁷ Ames, p. 309.

²⁸ Piper, p. 268.

²⁹ Goldy M. Hamilton, *The Play-Party in Northeast Missouri*, *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, xxvii, pp. 269, 297 (*The Girl I Left Behind Me*), p. 301.

³⁰ Loraine Darby, *Ring Games from Georgia*, *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, cxvi (1917), p. 218.

English Folk-Song and Dance, by F. Kidson and Mary Neal, 1915, contains some material on English folk-dances, with bibliography.

Repetition and interweaving of lines, is much more pervasive and essential in communal dance songs than in pieces of the Child type, and it is of a different kind. It shows us, however, the type of repetition to be expected in such dance songs. There is no evidence that ballads are ever built up from dance songs, but a great deal that dance songs may be built upon popular songs of all types. Mrs. Gomme notes that many English circle-game songs have evidently been derived from love ballads, drinking songs, and toasts, and that some of the dance games are of this origin.

If the ballads had been used typically in popular dances, collections like those made by Mrs. Gomme and Mr. Newell should reveal many traces of such usage. On the other hand, when we do not assume that ballads were the staple material of mediæval dance songs, what has come down to us in tradition is of just the character which we should expect. There are many "situation" songs among these traditional dance and game songs, and there are dialogue pieces;³¹ but one finds no traces of the development of dialogue songs into ballads proper, or of the "divorcing" of dance songs from the dance, on the way toward becoming lyric-epics.

When we examine genuine dance songs, it becomes clear that their most important element is the repetitional element. The texts of most of them shift even more than do the ballad texts, for there is no story to hold them together; but the repeated element, or the refrain, is stable. They are lyrical, and they tempt to movement. And, as suggested above, no matter how long they have been pre-

³¹ Mrs. Gomme thinks that the dialogue songs are of later development, II, p. 500. Professors W. M. Hart and G. H. Stempel think that dialogue songs represent a very early stage, in the history of ballads proper.

served in usage as dance songs, they have never developed into anything like Child ballads, nor have they been transformed into narrative pieces of any type. They show no signs of the evolution sketched by Professor Gummere, in his chapter in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*:

The structure of the ballad—what makes it a species, the elements of it—derives from choral and dramatic conditions; what gives it its peculiar art of narrative is the epic process working by oral tradition and gradually leading to a new structure.

Or in his *The Popular Ballad*:³²

. . . the course of the popular ballad is from a mimetic choral situation, slowly detaching itself out of the festal dance and coming into the reminiscent ways of tradition in song and recital.

The songs cited in the foregoing pages have survived under the right conditions, oral and communal, but they show no signs of an "epic process" leading to a new structure. The Child ballads, on the other hand, show something quite different from the dance songs. For them, the refrain is the variable element. Their texts remain as constant as the conditions of transmission allow; but the refrain does not remain constant within the same ballad. The test of living folk-song, examination of the kind of thing which the folk can improvise now, and the character of the songs which are genuinely and primarily dance songs, preserved in oral transmission, ought to show the fatuity of seeking an identical genesis for these types and for pieces like the English and Scottish popular

³² P. 84. It is rather surprising to find, on pp. 68-69, that "narrative is not a fixed fundamental, primary fact in the ballad scheme." This means that the very thing that makes a ballad a ballad, not verse of some other lyric type, is not a fundamental or primary feature of its structure.

ballads.³³ It is a safer hypothesis that the Child type of piece, once established in popularity, might at times be fitted to well-known dance tunes, or be utilized, like nearly any other kind of song, as a dance song, than that dance-genesis evolved the Child type—that the Child type represents, *par excellence* among poetic types, an evolution from dance origin.

III

NARRATIVE SONGS AND THE DANCE

We have seen that the most suitable dance song is in general of another type than narrative song. To begin with, primitive peoples do not dance to narrative songs; in fact they hardly know the latter. "The earliest universal form of poetry" is just what the ballad—meaning by ballad narrative song—is *not*. There are no primitive narrative songs, to which savage people dance while they sing; they dance to ballads only if by ballads we mean songs. Testimony concerning the Botocudos, or similar tribes, shows only that primitive peoples dance to very brief choral lyrics.³⁴ But it is not the origin of the lyric

³³ Andrew Lang, in his article on Ballads in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* wrote: "It is natural to conclude that our ballads too were first improvised and circulated in rustic dances." He held at the time the views still held by the majority of American scholars. But in his article on the same subject in the last edition of Chambers's *Cyclopædia of English Literature* (1904), he has given up this theory of ballad origins, and indeed, from his article, is hardly recognizable as still a communalist.

³⁴ Strictly, what are called "dances" among savages are in large part drama, and there is abundance of histrionic or mimetic action accompanied by songs of which action is the illustration, *i. e.*, there are songs suggesting ideas, and these are to some extent enacted. Over against these are the rhythmic chants and ejaculatory refrains that form simple motor suggestions or reverberations. The latter are the only ones "danced" in our modern sense of "dance."

in general, even if it sprang from the dance, instead of being as old as the dance, which is in question; nor are we concerned with the origin of various mediæval lyric types which probably had their genesis in the dance. To affirm that the lyric-epic type represented by the English and Scottish ballads developed from the dance is another thing, and not to be proved by the same materials.

It would be going much too far, would indeed be contrary to the facts, to affirm that there is never dancing to narrative songs. Among European peoples where the narrative song has established itself as a leading type of popular song, instances of it occur, and there should be occasional instances of it anywhere among advanced peoples.³⁵ This should be especially true of the shorter and more tuneful ballads. There was perhaps some dancing to heroic narrative songs, if not to "histories," probably to romantic tales, in England. We have seen that in American ring-dance or "play-party" games, the descendants of mediæval dance-modes, narrative songs are utilized occasionally, as *Barbara Allen's Cruelty*, referred to earlier, to accompany the dance. Songs of all types have undergone this experience, probably ballads along with the others, especially when the words were fitted to some familiar dance tune. But in a majority of cases the narrative pieces would be less suitable. Such utilization—

³⁵ "Narrative, too, are most of the dance songs in a modern Russian cottage," writes Professor Gummere, *Old English Ballads*, p. lxxix, and cites Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, 1872. But the examples given by Ralston are not narrative; they are not ballads but lyrics, and of the expected type. Professor Gummere's solitary example of a dance ballad is from the Ditmarsh folk of Holstein, but even that is more lyric than lyric-epic. It labels itself as a dance song, and might well be an older song which has been fitted to the dance, not one made in the dance. *The Popular Ballad*, p. 97, footnote.

this is my point—would not represent an original stage, but would be exceptional rather than normal.

Our best evidence for early European dance songs comes from France. The French dance songs which remain to us are lyric, not lyric-epic, and they are aristocratic.³⁶ Indeed, admits Professor Gummere, "all the Old French dances were aristocratic to the point of making modern investigators doubt the existence of the 'popular' customs."³⁷ English dance songs have already been examined. Let us turn to Icelandic usage. Vigfusson³⁸ tells us that the "dance, in full use accompanied by songs which are described as loose and amorous"—lyrical pieces these seem to be—appears at the end of the eleventh century. Icelandic *danz* comes to mean song; and *flimt*, loose song, and *danz* are synonymous words. The *rimur*, or epical paraphrases, with matter like that of our ballads, first appear about the middle of the fourteenth century. Almost all Icelandic sagas and romances, even the historical books of the Bible, were turned, we are told, into such lays or ballads. "The heathen heroic poems were certainly never used," says Vigfusson, "to accompany a dance. Their flow and meter are a sufficient proof of that." The word *dance* points, wherever found, to a new fashion introduced from France and spreading quickly over Europe. The old words would not serve for this new French art, which brought its own name even to Iceland. Icelandic evidence is the earliest that we have for the dance songs of Scandinavian countries, and the early Icelandic dance songs were, it would appear, lyrical and amatory, like the

³⁶ Jeanroy, *Les Origines de la Poésie Lyrique en France au Moyen Age*, 1904; Bédier, *Les Plus Anciennes Danses Françaises*, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Jan. 15, 1906, p. 398.

³⁷ *The Popular Ballad*, p. 97.

³⁸ Cleasby-Vigfusson, *Icelandic Dictionary*, under *danz*.

early French and English dance songs. The employment of heroic romantic narrative material belongs to a later stage.

In Denmark, courtly society of the later middle ages danced to narrative ballads, and the pieces closely resemble the Child ballads. But Danish literature seems to know no other song, no body of purely lyrical movement songs. The wealth of lyric poetry appearing in England and France and Germany was unknown in Denmark. It had no erotic lyric poetry. The ballad was practically the only form, we are told, in which the people expressed their feelings. The Danish ballads are very valuable. "We possess," says Steenstrup, "40 ballad manuscripts of the period prior to 1750, while Sweden possesses 10, the oldest antedated by many Danish." The Danish ballads were preserved by high-born ladies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who did fine service in collecting into manuscripts the songs current in the castles of the period.

The Danish pieces show their connection with the dance, as do most dance songs, in their very texts, and they even show how the dance was conducted. Here are some specimen lines:³⁹

Midsummer night upon the sward,
Knights and squires were standing guard.

In the grove a knightly dance they tread
With torches and garlands of roses red.

In sable and martin before them all
Dances Sir Iver, the noblest of all.

To the king in his tower strong
Floats the noise of the dancing throng.

³⁹ These and other examples are cited by Steenstrup, *The Mediæval Popular Ballad*, p. 12. Translated by E. G. Cox.

"Who is yon knight that leads the dance,
And louder than all the song he chants?"

Proud Elselille, No. 220.

Now longs the king himself
To step the dance;
The hero Hagen follows after,
For them the song he chants.
So stately dances Hagen.

Hagen's Dance, No. 465.

It was Mettelil, the count's daughter,
She stepped the dance for them.

No. 261.

There dances Sir Stig, as light as a wand,
With a silver cup in his white hand.

No. 76.

An account of the Ditmarsh folk of Holstein by Johann Adolfi (Neocorus) written in 1598, says that the people have *adapted nearly all their songs to the dance, in order to remember them better, and to keep them current.*⁴⁰ The dances he describes are like the Danish dances, with singing by a "foresinger," and choral response and refrain. There were also, as in our own ring-dance songs, whole pieces where all the participants sang as they danced.

There is little or nothing of the Danish type of self-labeled dance songs among the Child pieces. All but a few of the Danish ballads have refrains. Those lacking them are mostly late importations or translations. The movement is often nimble and rapid. On the other hand, of 1250 versions of the English ballads, about 300, *i. e.*, a fourth, have refrains.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Chronik des Landes Dithmarschen*, edited by F. C. Dahlmann, I, p. 177: "Nichtess weiniger isst tho vorwunderen (den up dat de Gesenge edder Geschichte deste ehr gelehret unnd beter beholden worden unnd lenger im Gebruke bleven, hebben se de alle fast den Dentzen bequemet), dat se nha Erfordering der Wortt and Wise des Gesanges," etc.

⁴¹ *The Popular Ballad*, p. 74.

As to origins, the Danish ballads do not help the communalists, but the contrary. The dancing for which they were used—some were employed for entertainment of other kinds, like riding or rowing—was the dancing of the high-born; both in content and movement, they seem suitable for this purpose. Both Grundtvig and Steenstrup seem to be satisfied with the hypothesis of minstrel authorship for them. They offer no suggestion of the responsibility, for the type, of festal village throngs, or of the throngs of primitive times. And it is interesting to note that when Steenstrup seeks to restore the Danish ballads to their older and truer form, and to rid them of spurious accretions, one of his first steps is to shear away various types of repetition, as “padding.”⁴²

At this point, something should, no doubt, be said with reference to the ballads of the Faroe Islands. They have been brought much into the foreground, in the discussions of the genesis of the ballads, and afford to communalists their chief stronghold;⁴³ although Steenstrup advises caution⁴⁴ in using them for help in understanding older ballad forms. Their recollection of Saga and Eddic poetry is strong, and this knowledge must have blended with knowledge of the poetry of the middle ages. Moreover popular ballads, he says, were taken up by priests and learned people. Several types of verse are to be noted in Faroe folk-song; but mostly the introduction of Danish ballads, supposed to have begun in the sixteenth century, has affected them. In the Faroes, in the preceding century at least, as, in less degree, in our own fast-dying-out ring-game or play-party songs of young people, throng dancing

⁴² *The Mediæval Popular Ballad*, pp. 75-77.

⁴³ “The ballad-genesis is more plainly proved for the Faroes than for any other modern people” (Gummere, *The Popular Ballad*, p. 69).

⁴⁴ See *The Mediæval Popular Ballad*, p. 7.

of the old circle type, with linked hands, was still preserved. The dancing is to singing rather than to instrumental music, again as in our ring-games; and as in the latter, all take part in the singing and all join in the refrain. Sometimes spontaneous improvised lines or verses, still as in our ring-games, arise out of the occasion itself.

The classic report of the Faroe dances was made by Pastor Lyngbye in 1822, who left descriptions of them. Their dance-themes are derived from Norwegian or Icelandic sources, a favorite subject being the "hero Sigurd." They dance to historical ballads, like the Danes,⁴⁵ but to religious and lampooning ballads as well. There are many lyric-epics, like the Danish ones we have mentioned. Indeed, the Icelanders know and use ballads in the Danish language. The fishermen also have rude dances, sometimes to songs of their own creation. Pastor Lyngbye tells of one, often utilized for argument by Professor Gummere, concerning a fisherman, pushed by his comrades into the center of the throng, while they improvised verses upon a recent mishap which had befallen him. The text of the song is not preserved, so we cannot place its type. We have no right to call it a ballad; most probably it was not. From what we are told of them,

⁴⁵ Our earliest testimony concerning the Faroe dances is to be found in the *Farøa Reserata* of Lucas Debes, Copenhagen, 1673. He writes, p. 251, that "the inhabitants of the Faroe Islands are little inclined toward useless pastimes or idle gaiety, but content themselves mostly with singing psalms . . . only at marriages or at Christmas time do they seek amusement in a simple circle dance, one grasping another by the hand while they sing old hero-songs." Pastor Lyngbye's much-quoted *Færøiske Quæder*, etc., was published in 1822. See also N. Annandale, *The Faroes and Iceland*, Oxford, 1905. The whole matter of Faroe folk-song was cleared up satisfactorily by H. Thuren in his *Folke Saangen paa Færøerne*, 1908.

these improvised fishermen pieces sound analogous to our own ranch-hand, cowboy, lumbermen, or negro improvisations, or to the occasional spontaneous ventures of our own ring-dances. They are upon events of the moment, of interest to members of the circle involved. They are fashioned on or are imitations of, songs of better type, of higher descent, and they are markedly crude and poor. Further, the Faroe fishermen pieces are sung to hymn tunes or to familiar airs, not to invented melodies, or to traditional melodies—not at least to melodies traditional from ancient times.⁴⁶ The Faroe songs teach us nothing as to the genesis of the lyric-epic type, for they themselves preserve and continue imported fashions. All in all, there is nothing to be learned from the Faroe dance-song customs that runs contrary to evidence from other sources. Rather do they bear it out. And certainly we cannot look to them as mirroring *par excellence* what is oldest.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ The type of song now used by Shakers, Holy Rollers, and other dancing religious sects ought to be a point of corroborative interest. They probably resemble the Salvation Army type of hymn.

⁴⁷ For German, an excellent display of dance-song material may be found in Franz Böhme's *Geschichte des Tanzes in Deutschland*, Leipzig, 1886. In chapter xv, "Über Tanzlieder," he groups his material into classes, to show the varied character of the content. He gives amatory songs first place, as the most frequent accompaniment of the dance, with many examples. Historical songs, old hero songs, and mythic pieces (his second class), were sung, he thinks, in the oldest period, for the dance. But his evidence for this is the hero songs of the Faroes, concerning which we have evidence from the seventeenth century, and the testimony of Neocorus (1598) concerning the Ditmarsh folk of Holstein. The bearing of this evidence has already been considered. The third class he names consists of ballads or epic folk-songs, for which his examples for Germany are meager. This class, he says, was "in full bloom" in the Romance languages and in England, as sung at the dance—a hasty and mistaken generalization. A fourth class consists of lampoons, vituperations, satires, etc., abundantly illustrated. This is the class of dance

In the Child pieces, the story, not suggestion of movement or suitability for movement, is the main thing. When a refrain is present, the only sure inference to be made from its presence is that the piece was made to be sung, or possibly to be recited orally. The refrain is present in mediæval as in modern songs which have no connection with the dance. But the refrain itself is not an essential in the Child pieces as it is in the Danish; we have just pointed out that hardly a fourth, by Professor Gummere's count, have refrains. In those which are surely old, like

songs which is often improvised. His next class consists of bird and animal songs, as of the nightingale, cuckoo, heron, owl, fox, etc. Riddle, wishing, and wager songs, and (rarely) religious songs constitute the last classes. In the second part of his history, the author prints 356 specimens of dance songs and melodies, in chronological sequence. Among these illustrative dance songs, the epic folk-song, the ballad of the Child type, is the type playing the least conspicuous rôle. How any scholar who examines Böhme's display of mediæval dance-song material—it is strikingly parallel to English dance-song material—can retain the belief that lyric-epic pieces like the Child pieces were conditioned first of all by mediæval dances, is hard to understand. They seem to be a lyric type least to be associated with such usage.

It is true that Professor Böhme, whose book was published in 1886, begins with the view that "Tanzlieder waren die ersten Lieder," "Beim Tanze wurden die ältesten epischen Dichtungen (erzählende Volkslieder) gesungen, durch den Tanz sind sie veranlasst worden . . .," "Die älteste Poesie eines jeden Volkes ist eine Verbindung von Tanz, Spiel, und Gesang." But his material does not bear out his preliminary statements, nor is he insistent upon the narrative song as the earliest dance song, as his book proceeds. He tells us, p. 230, that we learn the origin and the form of dance songs best from the South German *Schnadahüpfen*, short two- or four-line songs, to familiar melodies, often improvised (see his fourth class) by singers and dancers. Among these songs, the heroic element hardly appears, and the historic never. A careful survey of the citations in Böhme's *Geschichte des Tanzes* should disillusion believers in the ballad as the characteristic type of mediæval dance song, or as the leading lyric type of dance genesis.

The Battle of Otterbourne, The Hunting of the Cheviot, or Judas, no refrain is present. It is not then a constant feature, but occurs variably. Nor is it constant even for individual ballads, but fluctuates, apparently, with the melodies to which they were sung. If the Child ballad, or its archetype, was a dance song, the refrain formula ought to persist above all else, through oral tradition and dance usage, as it does in the dance or ring-game songs of which we are sure. It is what should identify the individual ballads. Moreover, refrains appear very abundantly in the later pieces and in broadsides; that is, they are not distanced, the farther we get from the hypothetical dance-throngs with which they are supposed to be bound up.

When the English and Scottish ballads do use the refrain, they use it in the art way, not in the folk way. It is something extraneous, introduced from the outside, varying for the same ballad, subject to modification or replacement at the will of the singers, not part of the fabric of the song. And like the refrains of the art songs of the middle ages, carols, or roundels, or *ballades*, it comes at regular intervals. It is not handled like the repetitions of traditional dance songs, usually the most stable element of the song, nor in the crude way of much of the repetition in unlettered folk-improvisations. Nor should it be confused with the one-word and two-word songs chanted in the choral repetitions of savage tribes. The latter are not refrains, but the whole song.

Refrains and choral repetitions are more necessary to other kinds of mediæval lyric verse than they are to ballads. It is not, in fact, the presence of a refrain, or of choral repetition that makes the Child pieces ballads. What is essential, if pieces are to be classified as ballads, is that they tell a story in verse. If they are ballads of the Child type they probably exhibit structural or lyrical

repetition in their presentation of narrative material; but no amount of structural or lyrical repetition makes a piece a ballad unless a narrative element is present. Repetition of both types is a striking characteristic, for example, of revival hymns, and these had their origin neither as ballads nor as dance songs; ⁴⁸ and it is characteristic, most of all, of game and dance songs proper; yet these are not ballads. In practice, it is conceded by everybody, communalists too, that a lyric may have a refrain, or repeated lines, as do many of the lyrics from the Elizabethan dramatists, yet not be a ballad. *Sumer is icumen in* has a refrain, but is not a ballad; the Bannockburn song has a refrain, but is not a ballad. On the other hand, a lyric may have no refrain or choral repetition, like *King Estmere*, or *Thomas Rymer*, yet be a ballad. As already pointed out, the name ballad attached itself to the type of lyric which is pretty far removed from the mediæval lyric type of early dance employment. If we are to insist on a dance element in a lyric which we are to classify as a ballad, we might apply the name, with better right, to art lyrics, or to folk lyrics of the fluid traditional type, held to unity and memorableness by the refrain, which persist in the ring-games of young people and in children's songs; or we should restrict it to genuine dance songs, of which we have many, of equal age with the majority of ballads which have come down to us.

In the English and Scottish ballads, dancing plays hardly any rôle. It is referred to a fair number of times; but as a recreation for the lords and ladies who appear

⁴⁸ Compare "Incremental repetition made up the whole frame of *The Maid Freed from the Gallows* simply because such ballads were still part and parcel of the dance" (*The Popular Ballad*, p. 117). Repetition is emphasized as the most characteristic feature of ballads, pp. 117-134, etc.

in the ballads it plays a less striking part than does the game of ball, its rival and a recreation with which it was often combined. It is far less frequent than reference to songs and to minstrelsy. Mostly the allusions are to dancing of the more modern type, accompanied by the music of instruments; and they bear testimony to the coming of dance-modes from France. A few typical passages are the following:

Seek no minstrels to play, mother,
 No dancers to dance in your room;
 But tho your son comes, Leesome Brand,
 Yet he comes sorry to the town.

Leesome Brand.

There was two little boys going to the school,
 And twa little boys they be,
 They met three brothers playing at the ba,
 And ladies dancing, hey.

The Two Brothers.

I'm gauin, I'm gauin,
 I'm gauin to Fraunce, lady,
 When I come back,
 I'll learn ye a dance, lady.

Rob Roy.

Another text ends:

I hae been in foreign lands,
 And served the King o' France, ladie;
 We will get bagpipes,
 And we'll hae a dance, ladie.

Or:

Get dancers here to dance, she sais,
 And minstrels for to play;
 For here's my young son, Florentine,
 Come here wi me to stay.

The Earl of Mar's Daughter.

Two might have reference to dancing of the older type:

Her father led her through the ha'
 Her mither danced before them a'.

The Cruel Brother.

When dinner it was past and done,
And dancing to begin
We'll go take the bride's maidens,
And we'll go fill the ring.

O ben then cam the auld French lord,
Saying, Bride, will ye dance with me?
'Awa, awa, ye auld French lord,
Your face I wowna see.'

Fair Janet.

Fair Janet, with its theme of probation by dancing, closely resembles certain Scandinavian and German ballads, but has lessened the part played by the dance test.

The internal evidence that the English and Scottish ballads were used as dance songs is very meager, compared, for example, with the very abundant internal evidence that they were sung. But in practice, few scholars would now make special claim that they were used as dance songs. No doubt they were, here and there, as in late times, we have seen, were *Barbara Allen* and *The Two Sisters*, in this country. The refrains of several might connect them with the dance, as Mrs. Brown's *The Bonny Birdy* (no. 82), or *The Maid and the Palmer* (no. 21). But most sound more suitable for recital or singing than to accompany rhythmic motion. Fitted to dance tunes they might be used as dance songs, but typically they were composed for other purposes. It is pretty hard for the student of real dance song to feel that the mass of the Child pieces, or their archetypes, developed from the folk-dance. Mediæval rural throngs, like their descendants to-day, probably danced mostly to something already familiar, and in itself suitable; more rarely they may have danced to their own spontaneous but inconsequential and impermanent improvisations. The typical mediæval dance song was, however, more lyric than epic. The English and Scottish ballads are as epic as they are lyric.

There is a classic passage in *The Complaynt of Scotland*,⁴⁹ 1549, by which we can check pretty well our assumptions and conclusions. The author of *The Complaynt* makes his "shepherds" (pretty literary and classical shepherds they are, genuine shepherds of the "Golden Age") tell tales, sing songs, and afterwards dance in a ring. Among the 48 *tales* with which they amused themselves, alongside Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Arthurian romance, and classical stories, as of Hercules, or of Hero and Leander, are listed the tale of "robene hude and litil ihone," and the tale of the "zong tamlene" (Tamlane). Among the 36 *songs*, are the Henry VIII *Pastance with gude companye*, *The frog cam to the myl dur*, *The battel of the hayrlaw*, and *The hunttis of cheuet*—probably the song that Sidney praised; also *The perssee and the mongumrye met*, i. e., *The Battle of Otterbourne*. The Child pieces referred to thus far have been either told or sung, as we should expect. Then comes a list of 30 *dance* pieces—most of them obviously such as *Al cristyn mennis dance*, *The gosseps dance*, *The alman haye*, *The dance of kyrlyryne*, *Schaik a trot*, etc. The list is headed by *The Hunt Is Up*, the tune of which is well fitted for dancing. No Child pieces appear. Number 92, *Robene hude*, is probably a *chanson de Robin* (see Cotgrave), or Robin Hood and Maid Marian piece. There were many Robin Hood dances, and they are not to be identified with the Robin Hood ballads. Number 93, *Thom of lyn* is not the ballad *Tamlane*, listed among the recited pieces, but the very different and wholly appropriate song of *Young Thomlin*, licensed in 1557-58. Number 108, *Ihonne ermistrangis dance*, is the one possible Child piece of the

⁴⁹ Edited by J. A. H. Murray, for the Early English Text Society, 1872, vol. 1, p. 63.

30; but neither Mr. Furnivall nor Mr. Murray believes it to be identical with any of the four ballads involving Armstrongs (*Johnny Armstrong*, *Johnny Armstrong's Last Goodnight*, *Jock o' the Side*, *Dick of the Cow*) which have come down to us. The Armstrong ballads in Child's collection are hardly suitable as dance songs.

Should not the *Complaynt's* roll of tales, songs, and dance songs, read very differently, had the English and Scottish ballads been the typical songs for the dances of rural throngs? The ballads which are mentioned are not mentioned as dance songs, and they are in highly literary and aristocratic company. The dance songs which are mentioned seem to be exactly of the suitable type which we should expect.

Much dance-song material, primitive, mediæval, and modern—the latter in our still-existent ring-dance songs—is available, from which to make observation and to generalize. The tendencies to be inferred from it are exactly the reverse of those assumed by Professor Gummere, and currently accepted in America.⁵⁰

1. When songs already existent are used as communal dance songs, they tend to retrograde to simple repetitions of striking lines or titles. If narrative, they are likely to lose the story. As for primitive dance songs, they are never narrative.

2. The repetitions of communal dance songs are much more abundant than the repetitions of the ballads, and

⁵⁰ That belief in dance origin, emergence from the illiterate, communal improvisation, epic development, and the priority of dialogue and situation songs, has current American acceptance, is shown by the fact that such belief is set forth, without hesitation or question, in the two latest American ballad anthologies: Professor W. M. Hart's *English Popular Ballads*, 1916, and Professor G. H. Stempel's *A Book of Ballads*, 1917.

they belong more genuinely to the fabric of the song. They are not of the symmetrical art type, of regular recurrence, the refrain type proper, but are cruder, or more pervading. Often some striking formula recurs over and over, and is the main song. For ballads proper, the refrain is not the most stable element but the most fluctuating.

3. There is no tendency for dance songs, whether situation songs or dialogue songs, to develop epic elements or to become "refined and ennobled by tradition," *i. e.*, to become real ballads. Real ballads used as dance songs tend to decay, through the wearing process of dance usage. Songs used as dance songs do not tend to develop into ballads, but rather to become simplified to some striking line or formula.

4. As regards form, genuine communal dance songs are not necessarily or invariably in ballad stanza, but of more fluid and variable pattern. They exhibit no one fixed stanzaic type. Sometimes they consist of but one short stanza.

We are hardly justified by the evidence, then, in saying that the English ballads represent a lyric type which has been "divorced from the dance, originally their vital condition." There is no testimony that the structure of the English ballads rests upon the dance, but rather the contrary; for theirs is not the structure of the normal and more appropriate dance song. That the dance songs of primitive peoples, and the earliest dance songs that we have in English, and our latest surviving dance songs are all three lyric, not lyric-epic, does not point to the origin of the English ballad type by "divorce from the dance."

There are three forms of psychic suggestion in poetry; first, emotional, as in the simple lyric; second, ideational, as in the narrative; third, motor, as in the refrain type, coupled with simple imperatives. The first and second

types may be associated with action in the sense of conduct, and they are so associated in primitive poetry. They are sometimes continued traditionally in what are called "dances," but are really drama; that is, they become histrionic. The third type is the only form fundamentally associated with the dance, and it is psychologically simple, i. e., *presentative* not *representative*. This psychical distinction should be borne in mind in study of the subject. Not all lyrics tempt to movement, and narratives (ballads proper) never, one would think, tempt to *measured movement* of the dance type.

Association with the dance of the festal multitude may be in place for the French *ballade*, or for the Italian *ballata*, but our own ballads do not include pieces which were primarily dance songs. That the English ballad type had its genesis in the folk-dance seems to be not only unproved but unlikely. Those who believe in dance genesis for the lyric in general may find in the dance the ultimate genesis of the lyric-epic type which we call ballad. But, in that case, no attempt should be made so sharply to differentiate the ballad in origins from other types of lyric verse. Those scholars who hold both positions at the same time, affirming that ballads originated as dance songs, yet that they were manifestly composed in some way utterly different from other lyric verse, are maintaining positions which are incompatible.

To the present writer, the gift of song seems as instinctive in man as the gift of rhythmic motion, not a development from the latter. Both were his from the first. No festal dancing chorus of a unanimous throng is needed to account for the song of birds, and song, the expression of emotion, not motion, may well be as instinctive in man as in birds. Other lyric forms, as lullabies, conjuring or healing songs, labor songs, love songs, are as primitive as

choral dance songs, not offshoots of the latter. Children sing instinctively, and they make their own songs, without waiting for the communal inspiration of group dancing; and it is commonly assumed that the development of the child mirrors that of the race. The beliefs that from the dance emerged music and rhythmical utterance, or song, that dance songs are the earliest lyrics, that narrative songs are the earliest dance songs, and that the English ballad type had its genesis in the dance, are neither borne out by the evidence, nor intrinsically probable.

LOUISE POUND.